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Thoughts in Rhyme

By MRS. HENRY L. BRADFORD

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San Francisco
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Dedicated to my Friends

—MRS. H. L. BRADFORD

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THE COMPLAINT OF THE ROSE.

I bloom in the garden, sweet lady fair,
My petals are all wet with dew;
I nestle close in the coils of your hair,
Or among your laces, so rich and rare;
But tho' deep be my blushes, and silent my voice,
To keep you from plucking me I have no choice.

I watch you stroll in the garden, lady fair,
With a youthful swain at your side;
From the bush I am taken, with never a care
Of the pain I may suffer—and then you dare
Bury your face in my rosy leaves,
And give not a thought to how my heart grieves.

Ouch! did I prick you, my lady fair?
Well, if I did, I don't care;
You pulled a thorn right out of my side,
And my heart to crush you wantonly tried.
My petals you've scattered all over the earth,
And in my fair garden you've left such a dearth.

My neighbors, the Asters, are laughing with scorn,
To see my poor head laid so low;
And my family tree feels so very forlorn
At the treatment accorded to me, and so,
A secret of yours I'll tell, lady fair,
Of just how it happened, right then and there.

The swain from you a kiss tried to steal,
As you held me close to your breast;
You needn't deny it, because I could feel
That you were greatly distressed;
He whispered that you were the "Rose" of his life,
And then I heard something that sounded like "wife."

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So then in confusion you tore me to bits,
For fear, I suppose, I should tell
The many sweet nothings that fell from your lips,
And so cast me away—Oh! well!
I sigh to think of the link you've just broken,
You might have kept me, if just for a token.

But that is the way of the world so wide,
Our uses we fill and are then cast aside.

THE ANGEL.

One beautiful calm and starry eve,
I sat at my window and it open did leave,
And looking up to the heavens in sight,
I saw a vision, that beautiful night.

And, as I gazed into infinite space,
The beautiful vision a form did take;
'Twas an angel I saw, all clothed in white,
As I sat at my window that beautiful night.

Nearer and nearer to me the Angel came,
Singing so softly a heavenly strain;
Smiling on me sweetly as she came in sight,
As I looked from my window that beautiful night.

Soon at my window the Angel did stand,
Speaking so softly of that heavenly strand;
Asking me whether I'd like to take flight,
Whilst I sat at my window that beautiful night.

Answering "yes," a mantle o'er me she threw,
As white and spotless as the Angel's I knew;
And taking my hand and holding it tight,
We soared into space on that beautiful night.

Up, o'er the tree tops, the houses and towns,
Making mere specks of the people and sounds;
Till into the clouds so fleecy and light
She led me beyond that beautiful night.

"Be not afraid, my child," she said,
As over the clouds a soft light was shed;
"The home of glory will soon be in sight,"
As she led me onward that beautiful night.

Soon at the door of heaven we stood,
  Feeling on earth I'd been none too good;
Till the angel knocking so softly and light,
  An entrance made on that beautiful night.

Hark! listen! to the beautiful strain,
  Swelling louder and louder in grand sweet refrain;
Ah! I dare not enter into the sight
  Of my heavenly father, this beautiful night.

Then glancing 'round the white throne, she said,
  "My child, 'tis the beautiful home of the dead,
Whose spotless souls from the earth took flight,
  Like yours did take, this beautiful night."

Alas! I know how unworthy I am,
  To stand with the Angel on that beautiful strand;
Baring my soul before God's pure light,
  His judgment to pass, on this beautiful night.

IGNORANCE.

Ignorance springs from lack of education,
As battles become the ruin of every nation;
A man whose character lacks honesty and grit
Soon digs for himself a bottomless pit.

Ignorance—the bane of every man's life,
Causes us nothing but heartache and strife;
Magnifying two-fold the faulty actions,
Mocks ambition, courage and chastening attractions.

Ignorance—the rock on which many lives founder;
Is the eddying swirl in which we all flounder;
Grit counts for nothing—woe him betide
Who wantonly rides by ignorance's side.

Ignorance dulls the fine sense of perception,
And shuts out the light of calm retrospection;
The brain is the headlight—the conscience the helm,
By which a man steers from ignorance's film.

Ignorance rocks the cradle of the low,
And causes criminality and violence to flow;
Red flies the flag of the ignorant's creed;
Anarchy, violence and murder to breed.

Ignorance is the womb from which sprang the birth of hate,
Claiming malice, jealousy and envy for its mate;
Into the black whirlpool, drawn by its suction,
Soon sinks the head of ignorant production.

THE SNOB.

She walks along the thoroughfare
With a high and mighty air;
And to the humble passerby
She gives a haughty stare.

A friend she spies coming down the street,
And jealous to see her so trim and neat;
She languidly places her lorgnette on her nose,
And takes her in from her head to her toes.

In less time than it takes to tell,
She and the friend have met—oh! well!
What's the use to tell you all they said;
On curiosity and gossip their souls were fed.

Passing further along her way,
On an old acquaintance she chances to stray;
Sorrow and strife has left its trace,
Where once was beauty, wit and grace.

Did she stop to speak to the old-time friend,
Or offer a helping hand to lend?
No—not she; with a dainty sweep and toss of her clothes,
An indignant blush to her cheek arose.

Out of range of the eyes that would pleadingly follow,
Humiliation and shame she tries to swallow;
That a person of such humble station in life
Should dare to her speak of meaningless strife.

And along the road of life she goes,
Caring nothing for the seed she sows;
Of selfishness and vanity—the love of praise
Has to her become a perfect craze.

What matters it that her intellect is dead,
And that at a glance her soul is read;
Is not her purse brim full of gold,
And her equipage o'er the pavements rolled?

Her glance seems to say, "I'm better than you,
My family is 'way above yours";
But of real friends in life she has but a few,
And them she quickly bores.

And so to old age she slowly passes,
By all she is shunned and despised;
Where once she was courted she meets but cold glances,
And friendship is merely disguised.

'Tis not the snob to whom sympathy warms,
For confidence in such is misplaced;
The jewel called "love" but rarely adorns
The soul, which is surely displaced.

What matters beauty—what matters grace,
Even when topped by a beautiful face;
If under the mask of the hidden soul,
No charity knocks at the door for its toll.

And so you who feel above sister or brother,
And snobbishly turn up your nose,
Just remember you're made from the same clay as the other,
Or your friends you will make into foes.

For life is short and fleeting at best,
And of real friends we have but too few;
For the rank and the file must lay down to rest,
And the old must give place to the new.

AN ODE TO CALIFORNIA.

(Dedicated to the Native Sons and Daughters of the Golden West)

I know a lovely country, where the mountains kiss the sky,
Where floods the golden sunshine every day;
Where the valleys clad in verdure green stretch to the ocean's side
And peacefully the birds sing the happy hours away.

California! California!
My own adopted land,
Where creeds of every nation
Are welcomed on thy strand;
Whence from every nook and corner
Of thy great and glorious State,
Flows abundant milk and honey,
Beyond thy Golden Gate.

I know a lovely place, where giant redwoods rise,
In towering magnificence, their heads to greet the skies;
Where purling streams and running brooks beguile the hours away,
And nature in its glory seems ever bright and gay.

California! California!
On thy proud and rugged breast
Thou hast nurtured many children
Of thy great and Golden West.
To many thou hast riches given,
Counting not the cost
In memory's pain and passion's gain,
Of those thou loved and lost.

Within thy sunny Golden State, there lies a fair old town,
Known throughout the wide world as a place of great renown;
Thru earthquake and fire—from its ashes resurrected,
Stands dear old San Francisco, a city new erected.

California! California!
In thy shining armour bright
Lies the golden key,
That he who knocks, the door unlocks,
And a password gives to thee.
No miser small his wealth to hoard,
Can pass thy threshold o'er,
And from the bowels of thy earth
Set by his golden store.

Like a sentinel o'er the misty vale looks old Mt. Tamalpais,
And in the rosy afterglow she stands, so meek and pious;
O'er hidden towns she slyly keeps silent, watchful eyes,
And on her crest an eagle's nest in happy ambush lies.

California! California!
Beneath Mt. Shasta's snowy peak,
Sublime and full of fire,
The rising wind, a path to find,
Plays softly on its lyre;
And grand Yosemite's sparkling falls,
In cadences sweet and long,
Throws its spray, in misty play,
Murmuring a rippling song.

BUOY BELLS.

Ring out, ye bells, o'er the briny deep,
  Proclaim the midnight hour;
Tell how many souls the ocean doth keep,
  Beyond the lighthouse tower.

Ring out, ye bells, a warning give
  To the sailors brave and true;
Their watches to keep o'er the souls that live,
  On the ocean deep and blue.

Ring out, ye bells, your solemn knell
  For the ship sinking in the deep;
The horror of death in its depths to tell
  Of the souls 'twill put to sleep.

Ring out, ye bells, the break of dawn
  Through the mists its light will shed;
A requiem ring in the early morn
  For the unforgotten dead.

ONLY A BIRD.

I'm simply a poor little bird,
That only chirrups and sings;
But my presence is felt by the high and the low,
And even in the palace of kings.

I build my nest high in the tree,
Where I feel airy and free;
I fear not the wind that blows from on high
But lift up my voice and sing to the sky.

My mate on the nest has fallen asleep,
For you see spring-time is here once again;
I'm waiting and watching for that little "peep-peep,"
And of nestlings I hope to have ten.

I fear not the wind through the tree, or its sough,
As my cradle is swung to and fro;
But softly a lullaby I sing to my mate,
As she nods on the nest, from early till late.

I rise with the sun and greet it with song,
And with kings I wouldn't change places;
In fear of their lives they live all day long,
With no trace of content on their faces.

I soar to the sky, then back to the earth,
And hover o'er the farmer just creeping to work;
With a worn, weary tread, and a face full of dread,
Of the labor he may not shirk.

I perch on the stile and lift up my voice,
In thanksgiving and praise to heaven,
That I'm only a bird and was not given choice,
To eat the bread of leaven.

And thus, I say, as you may have heard,
After all is said and done,
Of all living creatures under the sun,
Who is so free as a bird?

THE TWILIGHT HOUR.

How sweet it is to sit
Watching the shadows flit,
In the solemn twilight hour;
  Listening to the bells ring,
From out some Convent tower.

Watching the clouds as they fly,
O'er the darkening sky,
Whilst the dew is gently falling;
  The nightingale in the stillness
To its mate is sweetly calling.

Or thinking of a by-gone day,
When love its offering laid
At thy feet, so gently pleading;
  In thy loneliness and sorrow
Its caresses greatly needing.

How sad and solemn to think
Of the dear, but broken link
Which bound thee to the past;
  Its chain once gently forged,
In love and friendship cast.

This beautiful twilight hour
Memories bring, like some flower
To whose perfume a tenderness clings,
  Reminding us gently and sadly
That time hath taken wings.

THE MAJOR AND MINOR KEY.

Major Key (Blond).

Fair as a lily—with golden tresses,
  Eyes of violet, angelically pure;
Cheeks like a rose-leaf a blush caresses,
  Lips of carmine unconsciously lure.

Tenderly—archly—ever onward beckoning,
  Like flowers absorbing the sunshine and dew
Is her smile—like some bright jewel adorning—
  Crowning her womanhood with its glorious hue.

Minor Key (Brunette).

Soft as the gaze of a gentle dove
  Are the slumbrous eyes of this maiden fair;
Hiding in their depths a wondrous love,
  So solemn, so sweet—with infinite care.

Gentle the touch of her hand so white,
Soft as the sighing zephyr at night;
Angelic the smile its sweetness to lend,
In pitying sorrow the knee to bend.

Like the dying echoes of the organ's roll,
Solemnly the chimes at midnight toll;
And the voice of the maiden, low and sweet,
In prayer ascends to the Father's feet.

Softly slumber, oh! maiden fair,
With the wondrous eyes and raven hair;
Thy lips to seal—death's cold embrace
Through its valley and shadow thy feet shall trace.

THE SOLILOQUY OF THE FLOWERS.

A beautiful Lily, so graceful and white,
Said, as she shook off a pearly dew-drop,
"Sweet Rose, a question I'd fain ask to-night,
What do you think of the Forget-me-not?"

The fragrant Rose, so dainty and sweet,
The question a moment did ponder, then said:
"There is no flower more gentle and neat
Than the Forget-me-not, by the sunshine fed."

Then the tall white Lily in a majestic sweep
Glanced o'er the flowers that lay at her feet,
And said to the Marigold, "I prithee speak
And tell me what you of the question think?"

The Marigold, turning her face toward the flower
And shaking herself like a bird in a bower,
Answered and said to the Lily so fair,
"I prithee not ask me, what do I care?"

Then up spoke the Hollyhock, so slender and high,
Giving to the Marigold a frown and a sigh;
"There are some among us who'd fain make us feel
They're too far above us an answer to seal."

The beautiful Lily feeling hurt at the slight
Put upon the question she had asked that night,
Turned to the offender, and in accents low
Said: "My friend, your answers should always be slow."

Then turning to the Rose, and speaking to all,
The queenly Lily her opinion told;
And wishing them all a graceful good-night,
She folded her petals and swept out of sight.

THE DAISY.

A sweet little daisy in the roadside grew,
So shy and timid, so graceful, too;
Its pretty white petals turned toward the sun,
As though asking a benediction over someone.

As night o'er the earth its mantle shed,
Each little petal with dew was fed;
And the tired little daisy its slumber sought,
In peaceful contentment, with never a thought.

All through the night it calmly slept,
Giving no heed to the storm as it swept
Down from the heavens its anger to vent
On the poor little head, unsheltered and bent.

But with the dawn which came rosy and bright,
As though asking forgiveness for the work of the night,
The poor little daisy its sweet head unbent,
A silent thanksgiving to Heaven it sent.

A lesson we, too, may learn from this flower,
Our trials in silence and patience to bear;
And like the sweet daisy, in our troubled hour,
A thanksgiving to Heaven, we'll send in prayer.

THE MOTH AND THE FLAME.

From the country came one summer's day,
A winsome lass, so fair to see;
Letters—rich in promise, in her bosom lay,
And she longed among sights and sounds to be.

At the city's gate she was met by an elegant swain,
Who to his bosom this lass did strain;
A kiss on her ruby lips he pressed,
And her form in silks and jewels he dressed.

Her innocent eyes, so blue and bright,
Looked happy and glad on the city's light;
No thought of sorrow or pain did mar,
Or dim the brilliance of her star.

O'er the pavement with the swain she presently rolled,
Each fittingly attired—well supplied with gold;
Their beautiful carriage, with horses four,
Soon stopped before a glittering door.

Laughter and music issued forth from within,
This glittering palace of gaiety and sin;
The clink of the glasses, the mirth and the wine,
Soon helped subdue this pure soul divine.

As the mirth and hilarity grew furious and faster,
Of the poor country girl this swain became master;
Not a care in the world, not a thought of her doom,
Nothing but love for him who had builded her tomb.

The hours and the days, aye, the months have flown fast,
And nothing is left but memory of the past;
A social outcast, a pariah was she,
But a veritable wolf in sheep's clothing was he.

His love grew colder, hers but more ardent,
And the life of shame was her chain;
'Tis the old, old story, of the sinner hardened,
The story of the moth and the flame.

LOVE'S MESSAGE.

Ah! little birdie, soaring up so high,
Trying so hard to reach the blue sky,
A tender message from my sweetheart bring,
Or some sweet token, whilst on the wing.

And whilst through the air thy glad notes trilling,
Some drooping heart so softly thrilling,
My darling, dear birdie, so tender and true,
Is patiently waiting and watching for you.

I'm waiting and wondering, dear birdie, too,
What message my sweetheart will give to you;
Whether her eyes their slumber have sought,
And touching her pillow, hast given me a thought?

Oh! hasten! dear birdie, before the night,
Its mantle of darkness sheds o'er the light;
My darling's dwelling-place hiding from view,
My anguished heart—'tis breaking in two.

Methinks I see her bonny dark eyes,
The love and longing that in them lies;
And feel the sweet pressure of her lips on my brow,
As clasping my hand, we exchange a vow.

Ah! birdie, dear! love to me is sweetly calling,
The moon has risen; the dew is softly falling;
The Lilac with its perfume is scenting the air,
Making earth so enchanting, and all things fair.

Mother earth in the arms of Morpheus is sleeping,
The angels above their watches are keeping;
Sleep from my couch hath cruelly fled,
And my aching heart in its anguish hath bled.

Oh! life of my life, and heart of my heart,
Of my love and being, a part thou art;
Send birdie back, when the stars shall pale,
And breathe to me some sweet, loving tale.

THE STORM.

Hark! the storm—how it roars,
As it fitfully sweeps in gusts past our doors;
And the thunder above is rumbling and rolling,
Till the lightning it meets—like a lost soul calling;
And angrily it crashes in the heavens overhead,
As tho' judgment 'twere passing on the quick and the dead.

Hist! how the wind is howling and moaning,
And the timbers around are cracking and groaning;
The clock in the belfry is solemnly tolling
The hour of midnight—how cheerless—how drear—
Not a sound is heard but the storm on the ear;
And swiftly it hurries down the silent street,
As though a lurking ghost 'twere bound to meet.

Out o'er the ocean the tempest is raging,
The foaming waves are endlessly changing;
Hark! the boom of a signal is rending the air,
'Tis a ship in distress—how pitiful its despair;
The crew in anguished terror are trying to do battle,
For their lives are in danger—midst the awful rattle.

Each heart is murmuring its prayer, in fear,
And silently drops the falling tear;
For the huge waves are washing o'er the brave ship's sides
And danger and death in its lurking foam lies;
No help is near—no human aid nigh,
From each lip bursts an anguished sigh.

The gallant ship has sprung a leak,
And is quickly sinking in the briny deep;
The Angel of Peace its roll is calling,
Each tortured soul to its rest is falling;
One last gurgling moan and the spirit flies,
To its haven of rest—God's beautiful skies.

A WINTER SUNSET.

Oh! who can describe a winter sunset,
With its rosy, pink and amber hues;
And who has watched the fleecy cloudlets
Banking the sky above so blue.

Oh! who hast seen the last rays lingering,
O'er the water, like a sheet of gold;
Gleaming on the ice, the colors mingling,
Like the hues of a rainbow, cast in mould.

Oh! have you ever watched it setting
Majestically behind the trees;
And watched the colors harmoniously blending,
Like a replenished fire in the breeze?

The sun lights the sky in a last blaze of glory,
It sinks—and is finally hidden from view;
And looking like a wonderful phantasmagoria,
Its beauties fade, as we must fade too.

THE COUNTRY DANCE.

Whilst in the country visiting friends,
To a dance I was invited one night;
Invitations to all the neighbors were sent,
My! 'twas a glorious sight.

At nine o'clock, the girls with their beaus,
All began to arrive in loads;
The fiddlers stationed out in the hall,
Loudly the figures of the dance did call.

The beaus for their partners began to look 'round,
"May I have the pleasure" did often resound;
And laughing and chatting their places did take,
A sign to the fiddlers some one did make.

Then clasping the girls around the waist,
The dainty figures of the lancers they traced;
Till lost in the maze of the graceful dance,
You felt as tho' you had been in a trance.

Some called for the waltz, so simple and light,
Some for the polka—'twas a friendly fight;
The fiddlers then called out 'twas a sin
That no one knew how to dance "Mrs. Flynn."

Of all the things they danced that night,
Well! "Mrs. Flynn" was the funniest sight;
As over the floor like a whirling stone
They flew along like a Western cyclone.

Then came supper; 'twas midnight then,
They had everything you could write with a pen;
Flirtations went on with the boys galore,
I guess it left full many a heart sore.

The country dance I attended that night,
Will in my memory go through life;
A pair of dark eyes will haunt me too,
They belong to someone, I won't tell who.

LOVE.

Love one morning in my window flew,
Love one morning in my cold heart grew;
Love one morning a trial did send,
Love one morning my trial did end.

Love is something hard to define,
It's a sensation around the heart you'll find,
That'll make you feel happy and gay, or sad,
'Tis sometimes for good and sometimes for bad.

Love does not always come as it should,
It's apt to bring trouble as well as good,
To those who would by its glamour be led,
If wisdom be not o'er that glamour shed.

Then a warning take; list to this plea,
From evil glamours, I pray thee, flee;
Heed not the tongue that evil speaks,
For love brings sorrow as well as peace.

THY LOT.

If thy lot be cast among the rich,
And thy burdens on thee lightly bear,
Remember the One who ordained thy lot,
In love and pity other's sorrow share.

Though poor and needy, 'neath tattered clothes,
Thou'lt often find pure hearts that beat,
With love for Him who in this throes
Died, that He might lead us to His feet.

Ah! wilt thou turn from thy Savior's side,
Letting His children in perdition hide,
For the want of a little timely help,
Thou might'st have given from thy wealth.

WINTER.

Winter, a king o'er the earth, doth reign,
Bringing good cheer and joys,
For Christmas is here, and we would fain
Bring pleasure to girls and boys.

Winter, a snowy mantle doth shed
Over the earth like a great white spread,
And over the water doth lay like a vise,
Making each pond a great sheet of ice.

Winter, in a majestic and proud little puff,
Sweeps round corners and acts very rough,
As if in high glee at some mischief to find,
Some poor little soul to whom he's unkind.

So boys and girls, both great and small,
Good news I proclaim, to one and all,
Get out your sleds, your skates and toys,
And with a shout, make known your joys.

And show old Christmas you love him well
By being happy and joyful and gay,
And giving sweet Sue and dear little Nell
A ride on your own little sleigh.

CLARA.

Clara was a golden haired maid,
So sweet and winsome was she;
With eyes as blue as the summer skies,
That arched o'er the apple tree.

Her heart so pure, so full of love,
Ah! she was like a queen;
So gentle, so kind, so like a dove,
Doing nothing unkind or mean.

And so one day her summons came,
To heaven her soul took flight;
The days have never seemed the same
Since she was called that night.

My sister, I know, an angel is,
I would not wish her back,
For happier by far in heaven it is,
Than on this earth to lack.

So fare thee well, my cherished one,
In heaven I hope some day
To stand with thee on that great throne,
Apart from earth's sad fray.

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